BILL FAIRCLOUGH V JAMES BOND, FLEMING'S IMPERFECT SPY

All the James Bond actors playing cards together.

Bill Fairclough pictured over five decades playing cards.

Let me introduce myself. I am Charles Fairclough, the son of Bill Fairclough who was a secret agent working for British Intelligence and other state agencies for about five decades. I was the Operations Director of FaireSansDire which was a global niche intelligence agency that my father established in 1978 with the backing of Colonel Alan Pemberton CVO MBE and Barrie Parkes BEM: both worked extensively in British Intelligence (and the British Armed Forces) for many decades.

On 7 August 2023 I published an article about my father in which were listed circa 60 life threatening or near death incidents he endured. Roughly half of those events were assassination attempts, all of which he somehow survived, often thanks to Barrie Parkes and others associated with British Intelligence. Since then tens of thousands of people have read that article and we at TheBurlingtonFiles have been inundated with requests for us to compare him with fictional spies, especially James Bond, as characterized by Ian Fleming.

Accordingly, I have published this article but limited James Bond's characteristics and adventures to those set out in Ian Fleming's novels. Carrying out a comparison of a real spy (Bill Fairclough) and Fleming's fictional James Bond was not without difficulty. Why? For starters, my father was real as were his activities whereas Bond never existed and all of Bond's larger than life thrills and spills were merely figments of Fleming's imagination. Nevertheless, given Ian Fleming was (subject to my comments below) a reasonably skilful writer, he managed to create a multidimensional identity for Bond as if he were a real person and that is what I have compared with my father. I have used what Ian Fleming, not John le Carré, concocted to be his version of a "perfect spy", namely James Bond. The trouble was that Bond was a most imperfect spy as explained herein.

Fleming loosely based James Bond on some people he knew in real life. Indeed, Fleming described Bond as "a compound of all the secret agents and commando types I met during the war". However, Fleming, being an egotist, instilled another important ingredient into the mix of James Bond's character. Bond became not just the amalgam already described but a combo of that and of Ian Fleming himself and his own tastes, preferences and traits many of which Fleming consciously or otherwise added to the pot pourri we now recognise as James Bond. I'll refer later to that pot pourri making up Ian Fleming's "perfect spy" as "Fleming's Bond concoction". (Incidentally, in his novels, Fleming usually referred to MI6 as the Secret Service or just the Service because few knew what MI6 was when the novels were first published.)

Notwithstanding that Ian Fleming's novels were fictional, Ian Fleming made one blundering and fundamental factual flaw when he created James Bond which underscored his utter ignorance of how the Secret Service or MI6 operated. That fundamental flaw was that he called James Bond a secret agent but an MI6 secret agent would never have: (1) been an employee on MI6's payroll who took holidays and submitted expense claims etc; (2) reported directly to the Head of MI6, had annual appraisals and been on extremely familiar terms with many other MI6 employees such as Q or Moneypenny; (3) been a frequent visitor to MI6 HQ and other MI6 buildings; and (4) even met Governmental ministerial staff in Whitehall.

I realise that Fleming's novels are fictional but nevertheless, given Bond was a purported secret agent, elementary errors like these are unpardonable. What's more these mistakes have created confusion as to what a real secret agent is and how he/she operates in the real world. The 12 novels and two short story collections featuring James Bond which Ian Fleming wrote that I have analysed (using inter alia Artificial Intelligence) are listed below. Throughout these novels there exist loads of examples of James Bond's employment status with MI6 which contradict his supposedly being a secret agent.

As for 007 being "secret", I can only comment "tongue in cheek" that since everybody knew that his favourite drink was shaken not stirred, I'm surprised he wasn't poisoned more often … especially as he insisted on letting everyone know his name was "Bond, James Bond"!

Ian Fleming's novels were: Casino Royale – April 13, 1953; Live and Let Die – April 5, 1954; Moonraker – April 7, 1955; Diamonds Are Forever – March 26, 1956; From Russia, with Love – April 8, 1957; Dr No – March 31, 1958; Goldfinger – March 23, 1959; For Your Eyes Only (Short Stories) – April 11, 1960 including "From a View to a Kill", "For Your Eyes Only", "Quantum of Solace" and "Risico". As said, I have based James Bond's background and lifestyle on the contents of these books only and ignored all the 25 official James Bond films produced by Eon Productions. Other non-Eon Bond-related films (like Never Say Never Again in 1983, starring Sean Connery, and the 1967 version of Casino Royale) are not part of this official series and have also been ignored.

COMPARISON OF JAMES BOND'S AND BILL FAIRCLOUGH'S BACKGROUNDS AND LIFESTYLES		
Issues	**The Fictional James Bond**	**The Real Bill Fairclough**
Ancestry	British – Scottish	British – English
Religion at birth	Christian, Scottish Presbyterian	Christian, Church of England
Countries lived in	The UK, France and Jamaica	The UK, USA and Bahamas
Schooling	Eton/Fettes	Red House/St Peter's York
Universities	Geneva	Oxford/UEA/Northumbria
Scholarships	None	Two
Languages spoken	French/German	French
Age on losing virginity	16	13
Siblings	None	Brother and sister
Married	Once but widowed that day	Married twice, divorced once
Children	None	Two known
Height when circa 40 years' old	6' 0" or 183 cm	5' 11" or 180 cm
Weight when circa 40 years' old	168 lbs or 76 kg	168 lbs or 76 kg
Illnesses suffered	Poisonings + a few others	Poisonings + many others
Favourite sports	Skiing, golf and swimming	Football and tennis
Favourite films	Not known	Get Carter (1971)
Favourite books	The Bible	The Godfather (1972)
Favourite music	Jazz, Bach	Sixties/seventies hits
Favourite alcoholic drinks	Martini or whiskey	Newcastle Brown or lager top
Favourite non-alcoholic drinks	Strong coffee	Ribena
Favourite meals	Scrambled eggs, roast beef	Filet mignon, pork/lamb chops
Favourite restaurant	Scott's (Sea Food), London	Mandarin Grill, Hong Kong
Favourite casino	Casino Royale Royat, France	Les Ambassadeurs, London
Favourite casino game	Chemin de fer	European single zero roulette
Alcohol consumption aged 40	Excessive	Excessive
Cigarette consumption aged 40	60 a day on average	40 a day on average

Cigar consumption aged 40	None	On occasion
Recreational drug intake aged 40	Amphetamine Benzedrine	Marijuana
Preferred cars	Aston Martins and Bentleys	Jaguars
MI6 codename	007	JJ
On MI6's payroll?	Yes	No
MI6 standing	MI6 officer and field agent	MI6 secret agent
Visits to MI6 HQ	Frequently being an employee	Never so as to remain secret
Age when operational	Circa 18 to 42	Circa 19 to 70
Unarmed combat training	MI6	Glaswegian/other bouncers et al
Skiing skills	Excellent on land only	Reasonable on water only
Armed combat training	MI6	Ex SAS/MI6 experts
Shooting skills	First class marksman	First class marksman
Professional qualifications	None	FCA MSCI MCT
Highest rank in UK armed forces	Naval Commander	Cadet, Combined Cadet Force
Spy agencies worked for/with	MI6 and the CIA	MI5, MI6, CIA + Others
Countries operated in	Circa 12	At least 120
Countries visited on operations	Circa 20	More than 50
Intelligence agencies run	None	FaireSansDire
Number of directorships	None	More than 50
Number of subordinates	Acted as a lone field agent	Sometimes tens of thousands
Number of near death incidents	Circa 40-50 in 24 years	Circa 60 in 50+ years
Number of kills	36 direct hits	Classified
Honours awarded by HMG	Order St Michael/St George	None

What struck me during the course of this analysis was that ignoring the looks of all the Bond actors when compared to my father, "Fleming's Bond concoction" was superficially not that dissimilar to my father. That is hardly surprising given my father was a real secret agent and James Bond was "Fleming's Bond concoction", ie what Ian Fleming thought a secret agent should be like. Even so, while these two profiles might help you spot a spy, the key ingredients of what make a good spy are missing. Those ingredients include a psychological cocktail of his/her temperament, psychological disposition, integrity and the extent of his/her suspicious nature.

Photos of James Bond actors.

Photos of Bill Fairclough.

If you set aside Bond's naval background and my father's commercial background, they had a lot in common except that your average MI6 recruit (ie "Fleming's Bond concoction") was less scholarly than and lacked the intellect of my father. According to Barrie Parkes, it was that intellectual difference twixt your average MI6 recruit and my father combined with the aforementioned psychological cocktail that had led Colonel Alan Pemberton to recruit and invest so much in my father. In Pemberton's eyes my father had far more to offer than "Fleming's Bond concoction", which was after all only an amalgam of traditional "secret agents and commando types" with a shedload of Fleming's character stirred not shaken into the mix. Mind you, that was Alan Pemberton's speciality: recruiting agents intellectually smarter than he was and officers who seriously outranked him militarily. Little wonder he was a legend in British Intelligence.

As Alan Pemberton said, the best spies don't know they are spies. That seemed to have been Ian Fleming's problem. He knew he was not a real spy and that Bond was fiction. Put another way, behind closed doors Ian Fleming may have privately longed to have been a real secret agent just like the Bill Fairclough he never knew or met. Was that the motivation behind creating Bond? Fleming may have had an exciting life in the Second World War but it lacked the stuff secret agents lived with 24/7 and which only real adrenalin junkies could sustain and thrive on. Begrudgingly Fleming probably realised that no matter how good a writer he was, his fictional agent James Bond would never be a real secret agent "running in the field".

Ignoring all the psychological nuances, the main difference between James Bond and Bill Fairclough will always be that Bill Fairclough lived in the real world and didn't save the world every time a book or film was published about him. Nonetheless, my father's exploits would have pleased Vesper Lynd. In real life, it has been estimated that the funds my father recovered for HM Treasury et al from fraudsters, mobsters and enemies of the state over five decades were ample to fund the whole of British Intelligence for a few years in the seventies.

As for James Bond in real life, the only adage I have heard relating to my father was that in 1991 in Hong Kong when he was staying as usual in The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, a package addressed to James Bond was delivered to him. It had been couriered from Tokyo by a British soft commission broker/dealer working in Japan who had dined with him at the Mandarin Grill the night before. The package was delivered by the hotel's business support team who had close ties with FaireSansDire and predictably suspected the package might be for FaireSansDire's boss, namely my father. The hotel's business unit that allegedly had close ties with FaireSansDire no doubt may have had even closer clandestine ties with others in Hong Kong at the time.

Anyway, the package contained a list of businessmen allegedly connected to various Yakuza and Triad gangs involved in money laundering in the Far East. The same villains had apparently tried but failed to murder my father after dinner the night before. Paradoxically, that dinner must have been hilarious because Barrie Parkes had somehow infiltrated the hotel's Tannoy and speaker phone systems. Once ensconced therein he had begun to audibly demean those in the Mandarin Grill who were maintaining purportedly covert surveillance over my father. He taunted one of them for wearing

a grimy Special Forces tie when in fact he'd never served in The Regiment and mocked another because her soiled wig was a futile disguise bearing in mind she wore it so often. They left somewhat red faced before finishing their main courses.

The reason my father's guest was fearfully impressed was that he discovered that Barrie Parkes was in Brussels in Belgium that night! Having witnessed the commotion in the restaurant, the broker agreed to immediately report what he knew to the appropriate authorities as long as he could say in any court of law that he had not sent the data to Bill Fairclough or FaireSansDire as an intermediary for HMG. That was why the package was addressed to James Bond c/o The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Hong Kong from Dr Yes … yes you may have guessed it! Needless to say, my father's activities in Hong Kong would almost certainly have been monitored by the good, the bad and the downright ugly.

I hope you have found this article fascinating. If you have any comments please email me via https://theburlingtonfiles.org/index.html#/contact-us. Maybe it would be fitting to give Sir Michael Caine the last word on all this. When he turned down the opportunity to star in the James Bond movies he said "I've always played real people".

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